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ABSTRACT

A sample of 725 out of 3,241 incoming freshmen to the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) were administered the University New Student Census (UNSC) to determine a group profile for 1990. A selection of basic statistics included the following: (1) 53% of the incoming freshmen were male, and 71% were white; (2) approximately 20% had an A or A+ average in high school, and slightly more than 66% had a B or B+ average; and (3) the average high school GPA (grade point average) for all first-time freshmen was 3.00, and the mean SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) score was 1,086. Student responses revealed that about 33% were attending college to get a better job, and their choice of UMCP was because they wanted a good education. All but 1% planned to get at least a baccalaureate degree. Attaining a Master's (M.A. or M.S.) degree was most popular, and 33% of the students planned on attaining a higher degree (doctoral, law, medical, or divinity). Additionally, more than 33% of the students thought incoming freshmen would cheat on exams if they thought they wouldn't get caught, that the two most important issues to solve in society were the ecology/pollution problem and drug abuse, and both men and women said they were not encouraged to explore nontraditional interests in their high school studies and activities. (GLR)

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A PROFILE OF INCOMING FRESHMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK, 1990

Deborah A. Gerrity and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report #14 - 90

The computer time for this research has been supported in full through the facilities at the Computer Science Center of the University of Maryland, College Park. Data were collected with the cooperation of the Orientation Office, Division of Student Affairs, University of Maryland, College Park.

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Summary

During the freshman summer of 1990 orientation at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), the Counseling Center administered the **UNIVERSITY NEW STUDENT CENSUS (UNSC)** to 725 incoming freshmen. Slightly more than half of the incoming freshmen were male (53%) and approximately 71% were White. By far, the largest group of **UNSC** participants planned to live on campus in the University residence halls. About one-fifth of the **UNSC** respondents had had an A or A+ average in high school; slightly more than two-thirds had had a B or B+. The average high school GPA (grade point average) for all first-time freshmen was 3.00 and the mean SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) score was 1,086.

Approximately a third of the **UNSC** students went to college to get a better job. Most students said that they chose UMCP because they wanted to get a good education. All but 1% of the incoming freshmen planned to get at least a baccalaureate degree. The Master's (M.A. or M.S.) degree was most popular and a third of the students planned to get an even higher degree (Doctoral, Law, Medical or Divinity). More than half said that they could not foresee any major obstacles getting in the way of achieving their academic goals.

Students were asked about their interests in various student services. Incoming freshmen agreed that they were interested in seeking help regarding reading and study skills. A high percentage of the students were interested in campus recreational activities (intramural sports, informal recreation, fitness & sport clubs). Students were also asked about various values and attitudes. More than three-quarters of the incoming freshmen agreed that most high school students would cheat on an exam if they thought they wouldn't get caught. They thought that the two most important social issues for society to solve were ecology/pollution and drug abuse. Both men and women said that they were not encouraged to explore nontraditional interests in their high school studies and activities.

A PROFILE OF INCOMING FRESHMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK, 1990

Annually, during the freshman summer orientation at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), the Counseling Center administers the **UNIVERSITY NEW STUDENT CENSUS (UNSC)**. The **UNSC** is a survey instrument containing demographic, attitudinal and behavioral items. In 1990, 725 incoming freshmen from a sampling of orientation programs completed the **UNSC** from a total population of 3,241 first-time freshmen at UMCP. More than 90% of all first-time freshmen usually attend the summer orientation programs. This report will present a selection of responses to items from the **UNSC.** Please note that item percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding or presentation of only the most popular responses. When differences between men and women are discussed, they are significant at the critical level of $p < .05$.

WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS?

Demographics. As in previous years, slightly more than half of the incoming freshmen were male (53%) and approximately 71% were White. Table 1 displays racial and gender information for 1990 **UNSC** respondents compared to 1989 **UNSC** respondents and the total 1990 first-time freshman class.

Of those students who reported a physical handicap of some kind, 64% listed some loss of sight, 12% other conditions, 8% some difficulty with speech, 8% a learning disability and 6% some loss of hearing. Since some students with disabilities may not attend the general orientation programs, the statistics about disabilities may be lower than the actual incidence.

Table 1

General Characteristics of 1990 First–Time Freshmen

	1990 UNSC Census Freshmen	All 1990 UMCP First–Time Freshmen	1989 UNSC Census Freshmen
Sex			
Male	53%	53%	52%
Female	47%	47%	48%
Race			
American Indian	<1%	<1%	<1%
Asian	14%	12%	11%
Black	11%	15%	13%
Hispanic	3%	4%	3%
White	71%	66%	70%
Other	1%	<1%	2%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Most of the students (71%) were from suburban locales; but the remaining students reported having lived in both cities (13%) and small towns (12%). Only 4% were from rural or farming areas.

Academic Standing. About one-fifth of the **UNSC** respondents had had an A or A+ average in high school; slightly more than two-thirds had had a B or B+. Females were significantly more likely to be in the B+ and above categories while males tended to have B averages. The Office of Academic Data Systems at UMCP reported that the average high school GPA (grade point average) for all first-time freshmen was 3.00 and the mean SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) score was 1,086.

Almost all students had been in the upper half of their high school graduating class (96%) and almost a third (30%) were in the top 10%.

Parents' Education. The parents of the **UNSC** respondents were very well educated. Less than 5% of the students' fathers and 4% of their mothers had not received a high school diploma, while approximately 35% of the fathers and 17% of the mothers had postgraduate degrees.

Residence During College. By far, the largest group of **UNSC** participants planned to live on campus in the University residence halls (70%). Almost all of the remaining students planned to live with their parents or other relatives (27%). The commute will be more than 11 miles each way for 53% of those students not living on campus.

WHY ARE THEY IN COLLEGE?

Main Reason. Only 6% of the students seriously thought about not going to college, and 65% expected that their courses at UMCP would be stimulating and exciting. Approximately a third of both men and women went to college to get a better job (males = 36%; females = 32%), but the other two-thirds had significantly different reasons, depending on gender, for deciding to go to college. For men, the reasons were: make more money (15%), gain a general education (14%), prepare for graduate school (14%), and learn more about things (11%). Women wanted to go to college to: gain a general education (19%), prepare for graduate school (18%), learn more about things (14%), and make more money (6%).

Why UMCP? Students were asked how UMCP ranked compared to other schools to whom they were applying. For males, UMCP was: first choice (60%), second choice (14%) or third choice (8%). Females ranked UMCP: first choice (57%), second choice (27%), other (6%) or third choice (5%).

There were also significant differences by gender for the reason why the student chose to come to UMCP. Most students in both groups chose UMCP because they wanted to get a good education (males = 42%, females = 34%). Other reasons for men were: low tuition (19%), "other" (17%), wanted to live at home (8%), and advice of a former student/friend (6%). The remaining women chose UMCP because of: "other" (22%), low tuition (21%), wanted to live at home (8%), and relative's wishes (7%).

The most influential person in their decision to attend UMCP differed in percentages of students for men and women but not in the general order: parents (males = 39%,

females = 44%), other (males = 27%, females 26%), University students (males = 9%, females = 14%), other family members (males = 9%, females = 8%), and high school students (males = 8%, females = 5%).

Highest Degree Intended. All but 1% of the incoming freshmen planned to get at least a baccalaureate degree. The Master's (M.A. or M.S.) degree was most popular (44%) and an additional 33% of the students planned to get a higher degree (Doctoral, Law, Medical or Divinity).

Current Educational Objectives. Men and women agreed on their educational objectives. They thought that they needed to: learn skills directly applicable to their career goals (39%), learn as much as they could about several fields of study (19%), become independent in their thinking and behavior (14%), and decide upon a career goal (13%).

WHAT ARE THEIR ACADEMIC STRENGTHS AND NEEDS?

Contributions to Development in the Past Year. The incoming freshmen indicated that their social life (27%) and the friendships that they made (23%) had been most important to their development, while another 12% listed their job experience.

Classroom Behavior and Study Methods. Most students agreed that they rarely missed any of their high school classes (strongly agree or agree = 63%, neutral = 13%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 24%) and that they frequently volunteer to give answers or raise questions in class (strongly agree or agree = 50%, neutral = 28%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 22%). Students reported that they were good at budgeting their time (strongly agree or agree = 43%, neutral = 28%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 30%), but when asked about studying, both men and women reported the tendency to spend

50% or more of their study time cramming. More men than women reported that they crammed to meet deadlines 70% or more of the time (males = 49%, females = 40%). More women than men reported usually or almost always keeping up with their reading assignments (males = 40%, females = 51%). Men more strongly agreed than women with the statement: "My family often encouraged me to study more when I was in high school." (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 63%, neutral = 12%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 25%. means: males = 2.14; females = 2.69 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]).

Weakest Area. Women chose math (29%), study habits (16%), writing (14%), science (14%), and taking exams (13%) as their academic weaknesses. Men chose study habits (31%), writing (20%), math (17%), and reading (12%) as theirs.

Services Needed. Incoming freshmen agreed that they were interested in seeking help regarding reading and study skills (strongly agree or agree = 44%, neutral = 31%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 19%). Both men and women were especially interested in improving their writing skills but women were more strongly interested (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 90%, neutral = 7%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 3%. means: males = 1.77; females = 1.64 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]). Students were also interested in improving their spelling skills (strongly agree or agree = 53%, neutral = 27%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 20%). Over a third of incoming freshmen agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "I expect to have a hard time adjusting to the academic work of college." and almost another third were unsure (strongly agree or agree = 34%, neutral = 30%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 36%).

Ten percent of the incoming freshmen were interested in seeking emotional/social counseling (neutral = 27%, disagree or strongly disagree = 63%) and 52% in seeking educational/ vocational counseling (neutral = 30%, disagree or strongly disagree = 19%).

WHAT ARE THEIR EXTRACURRICULAR INTERESTS?

General Interests. Students were asked to choose which of eight general categories of extracurricular activities were of most interest to them. Almost two-thirds of the males (65%) and more than one-third of the females (34%) chose recreational activities (intramural sports, informal recreation, fitness & sport clubs). The other seven choices and the "other" category were more evenly divided among the remaining students with the next most popular choices being: musical or dramatic organizations (males = 7%, females = 13%), and student publications/communications (males = 5%, females = 11%). Women were more strongly interested than men in joining some campus clubs or groups (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 82%, neutral = 16%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 3%. means: males = 1.99; females = 1.68 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]).

Recreational Sport Activities. When asked specifically about recreational sport activities, students expected to be involved in some form of recreation sport activity or fitness program at the University but men more strongly agreed than women (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 71%, neutral = 19%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 10%. means: males = 2.12; females = 2.22 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]). Men agreed and women disagreed with the statement: "I closely follow one or more UMCP athletic teams." (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 34%, neutral = 20%, and

disagree or strongly disagree = 46%. means: males = 2.85; females = 3.45 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]).

Volunteer Work. Although the majority of students had done some type of volunteer work, more women than men responded in the affirmative (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 72%, neutral = 10%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 19%. means: males = 2.30; females = 2.04 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]).

WHAT ARE THEIR FUTURE VOCATIONAL/OCCUPATIONAL GOALS?

Immediate Post-Graduation Goals. Over 90% of the incoming freshmen planned to go on to graduate school (males = 37%, females = 47%), begin a career (males = 40%, females = 29%), or get married and begin a career (males = 15%, females = 16%) immediately after graduation. A small percentage planned to travel (males = 5%, females = 4%) or get married and have children (males = 1%, females = 2%).

Types of Careers. **UNSC** participants were asked to respond to the statement: "The three occupations that are my vocational goals right now are:". Responses were then coded into one of the six Holland (1970) vocational types (see Table 2). In looking at their first choice, students chose occupations in the following categories: Investigative (males = 30%, females = 36%), Enterprising (males = 20%, females = 20%), Realistic (males = 30%, females = 9%), Artistic (males = 9%, females = 15%), Social (males = 6%, females = 16%), and Conventional (males = 6%, females = 6%).

Nontraditional Careers. Men more strongly disagreed than women, but both groups disagreed that they were encouraged to explore nontraditional interests in their high school studies and activities (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 29%, neutral = 17%, and

Table 2

Holland Types	Career Themes	Types of Occupations Preferred
Realistic	Rugged, practical, enjoys working outdoors, enjoys working with things more than ideas or people, especially with tools and large machinery	Agriculture, nature, mechanical activities, construction work
Investigative	Likes working with ideas more than with people or things; enjoys solving abstract problems; creative	Design engineers, social scientists, laboratory technicians
Artistic	Artistically inclined and likes to work on activities requiring self-expression; original, creative	Artists, composers, actors, poets
Social	Social and outgoing; concerned about the welfare of others; enjoys being center of groups; prefers to work with people rather than ideas or things	School superintendent, clinical or counseling psychologist
Enterprising	Great talent with words and putting to use in selling, leading, and dominating; enjoys power, status, material wealth	Salespersons, business executives, realtors, politicians
Conventional	Prefers highly structured work settings; enjoys office work and fits well into large organizations	Bank examiners, statisticians, tax experts, computer operators

disagree or strongly disagree = 54%. means: males = 3.67; females = 3.08 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]). Neither gender had talked to people in nontraditional careers when thinking about their own, although men disagreed more strongly (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 22%, neutral = 17%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 61%. means: males = 3.71; females = 3.51 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]). Although both men and women agreed that their families would support their decision to enter a nontraditional career, more women than men strongly agreed (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 72%, neutral = 15%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 13%. means: males = 2.25; females = 1.87 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]).

Important Characteristic of Career. Men and women chose different characteristics as important. Men listed: high anticipated earnings (28%), intrinsic interest in the field (17%), and a well respected or prestigious occupation (10%). Women chose: intrinsic interest in the field (21%), high anticipated earnings (16%), and work with people (14%).

Career Counseling. Two-thirds of the incoming freshmen had met with their high school counselor concerning career planning. Most students (66%) had met with their high school counselor on the average of once or twice a year (2 to 9 times). More than half (52%) of the students were interested in seeking educational/vocational counseling while at UMCP.

Obstacles. Students were asked to choose among six obstacles as the most likely to prevent their attainment of their occupational goals. More than half (males = 64%, females = 53%) said they could not foresee any major obstacles and an additional 22% (males = 24%, females = 20%) chose the "other" category. Of the choices specified, students

thought it would be difficult to balance career and family (males = 4%, females 17%) or that they would not be good at their chosen career (males = 4%, females = 5%).

WHAT ARE THEIR BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES?

School. Seventy-seven percent of the incoming freshmen agreed or strongly agreed that most high school students would cheat on an exam if they thought they wouldn't get caught. Only 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Both sexes disagreed that they were more interested in the grade than course content (strongly agree or agree = 19%, neutral = 26%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 56%).

Religion. The most prevalent religion in which students had been reared was Catholicism (30%), followed by Protestantism (20%), and Judaism (18%). Fourteen percent said they were not raised with a religion and an additional 18% listed "other." When asked: "What religion are you a member of now?", the responses were fairly similar: Catholicism (25%), Protestantism (18%), Judaism (18%), none (19%) and "other" (20%), although there was a shift from Catholicism and Protestantism to none and "other." Most students felt that their faith or personal philosophy was very or fairly adequate (69%) as a guide for their outlook and behavior while 8% felt is was very or fairly inadequate. Most students did not expect to be involved in religious activities on campus (strongly agree or agree = 18%, neutral = 30%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 53%). Students were fairly evenly divided on the question of whether praying to God unified their mind and body (strongly agree or agree = 32%, neutral = 39%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 28%) and disagreed that meditation is important for their spiritual development (strongly agree or agree = 11%, neutral = 31%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 58%). They agreed

that a person can be spiritual without believing in God (strongly agree or agree = 50%, neutral = 31%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 19%). The incoming freshmen disagreed with the statement: "Studying the teachings of the different world religions would only hinder my spiritual development." but women were more likely than men to disagree (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 6%, neutral = 28%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 66%. means: males = 3.85; females = 4.02 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]). The largest group of responses to the question: "God only exists in my mind." were negative but a substantial group of students responded neutrally (strongly agree or agree = 7%, neutral = 43%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 50%).

Games. Most males and females thought that the most important thing in playing a game was to play as well as you are able (males = 66%, females = 72%) but the second largest group of males thought that to beat your opponent was the most important (males = 18%, females = 7%) while the second largest group of females thought the most important thing was to play the game fairly (males = 16%, females = 21%).

Social Issues. When asked what was the most important issue for society to resolve, men chose: ecology/pollution (34%), drug abuse (32%) and racism (17%). Women reversed to first two but had the same top three issues as most important: drug abuse (36%), ecology/pollution (33%), and racism (17%). Women, more than men, agreed that the University should actively recruit ethnic minority students who are not Black (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 35%, neutral = 45%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 20%. means: males = 2.88; females = 2.71 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]).

Hispanics. Students were asked if they believed that Hispanics were victims of racism. Almost half (48%) thought that they were victims and an additional third (36%) were neutral on the issue. Most of the men and women (men more strongly disagreed) disagreed that they would think twice about dating an Hispanic (both genders: strongly agree or agree = 20%, neutral = 32%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 48%. means: males = 3.58; females = 3.33 [1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree]). Most students were not interested in taking classes in Latin American studies (strongly agree or agree = 9%, neutral = 30%, and disagree or strongly disagree = 61%).

References

Holland, J.L. (1970). The self-directed search: A guide to educational and vocational planning. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press.